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Subject: Triad Business Journal: Huge N.C. wind farm may be suspended

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Jul 3, 2017, 1:16pm EDT **Updated** Jul 3, 2017, 1:47pm EDT

[Lauren K. Ohnesorge](#)

Months after reaffirming its commitment in eastern North Carolina, Virginia's Apex Clean Energy is preparing for the ramifications of a wind moratorium in North Carolina.

Kevin Chandler, spokesman for Apex Clean Energy, which is planning a 105-turbine project in North Carolina, confirms the firm may be suspending its investment plans.

"An 18-month delay coupled with the near-certainty of additional red tap means we will almost certainly have to suspend Timbermill Wind if House Bill 589 becomes law," Chandler said in an email.

Timbermill Wind, the name given to the project planned for Perquimans and Chowan counties, was to be the state's second utility-scale wind farm, after an Avangrid-developed project near Elizabeth City that's already spinning and creating power for Amazon.

"It's unfortunate that a small number of elected officials were able to hijack what should have been a bright moment for clean energy in North Carolina," Chandler writes, adding that the measure, House Bill 589, "threatens private property rights and jeopardizes hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in rural economies." He adds that the moratorium, added in an evening committee weeks after the original bill had been passed in the House, "sends a clear signal that wind energy is not welcome in North Carolina while selfishly seeking to divide the renewables industry."

"This is not the behavior of a pro-business, pro-property rights legislature," he writes.

A small group of legislators have repeatedly tried to pass wind moratoriums and regulations that would add additional scrutiny to project approvals. The latest attempt by Sen. Harry Brown (R-Jones, Onslow) was to add the wind moratorium language to an existing energy bill – a compromise measure Duke Energy had reached with the solar industry. Until last week, it didn't include any language at all involving wind energy. In an evening committee, Brown added an addendum calling for a moratorium while research was conducted on wind farms' impact to military operations in the state.

And it passed in both the House and Senate prior to the July Fourth holiday weekend.

"It's worth reminding everyone that in addition to other facets of permitting, there already exist clear, thorough reviews at both the federal and state levels for potential wind energy interactions with military installations," Chandler wrote. "This is an anti-business moratorium shrouded as a pro-military measure."

Brown hasn't responded to multiple requests for comment.

But he's not the only critic of the Timbermill project. While Chowan County commissioners had approved a permit for its development, Perquimans County had not. Commissioners voted down the project after hearing concerns from residents concerned about the farm's aesthetics. Apex has appealed the permit rejection and, up until last week, had been planning to move forward, regardless – even if it had to be a smaller, one-county project.

The bill is awaiting a signature from Gov. Roy Cooper. It's unclear if he'll sign the bill. His office had not returned a request to comment Monday.

According to Apex, the Timbermill project is expected to create up to 150 jobs during construction and 10 permanent positions. The 105 wind turbines would be spaced approximately a fourth to a half of a mile apart and leasing landowners could continue farming their land or harvesting timber with very limited disturbance. Construction was targeted to begin in 2018.

Lauren Ohnesorge covers technology and entrepreneurship.